

Saipan Tribune

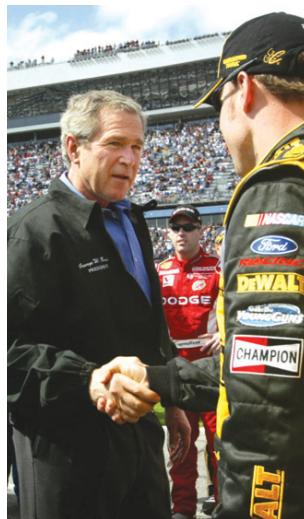
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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TUESDAY FEBRUARY 17, 2004

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INSIDE



Shelved Ban

The Bush administration quietly shelved a proposal to ban a gasoline additive that contaminates drinking water in many communities, helping an industry that has donated more than \$1 million to Republicans.

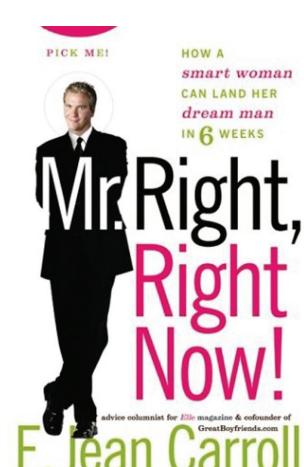
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Better Ride

Americans by the hundreds of thousands are rejecting traditional truck-based SUVs for what are known in the auto industry as "crossovers"—SUVs based on passenger car chassis. In the case of the SRX, that would be the Cadillac CTS, a sedan.

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Finding Mr. Right

After receiving thousands of "HELP ME!" letters over the years from women desperately in need of a date, Elle magazine's advice columnist and resident firecracker E. Jean Carroll Carroll, herself twice divorced ("the normal amount," she says), was just plain tuckered out from all that counseling.

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CDC, NMI seal anti-terror pact

Deal allows transfer of 'bioterror' materials to CNMI in case of attack, disasters

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has agreed to transfer medical materials from its Strategic National Stockpile to the CNMI in case of terrorism, natural, or technological disasters.

In a recently signed memorandum of agreement between the CNMI and CDC, the CDC will transfer its medical materials from SNS, formerly the National Pharmaceutical Stockpile, to a designated site in the Commonwealth to effectively respond to acts of chemical or biological terrorism.

These materials include antibiotics, antidotes, medical supplies and equipment, and certain controlled substances, which may be used by the CNMI to respond to an attack of chemical or biological terrorism.

The MOA requires that the CNMI must request for the materials and identify the delivery site.

Under the terms, the CNMI is responsible for storing, organizing, repacking, and distributing the SNS materials; and all its government distributors such as

See CDC on Page 8



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

LEGISLATORS IN ACTION

Members of the 14th House Leadership showed up for work yesterday, February 16, 2004, despite the fact that Monday was President's Day holiday. The new leadership also works on weekends to plan vital legislation.

Sablan: SU mess sensationalized in Beijing

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Saipan is getting "a very bad press" in Beijing over the Saipan University mess, according to businessman and CUC board chairman Herman P. Sablan.

Sablan, president of the U.S.-CNMI International Business and Professional

College, who recently went on a seven-day business trip to Beijing, said yesterday that newspapers in Beijing falsely reported that Chinese students who enrolled with SU last fall were abandoned and are living horrendous lives on the streets of Saipan.

"This issue was sensationalized. It's very bad news for Saipan. They showed me

newspapers reporting that the students are staying on the streets of Saipan, that they are not taken care of," said Sablan.

He said the news was written in Chinese.

"I don't really understand Chinese news but people were translating it to me," said Sablan.

The CUC chairman said that he

refuted the news when he was interviewed by the local media.

"They interviewed me when they learned that I'm from Saipan. It's a good thing because it gave me the chance to clear the issue. I told them the CNMI government did a good job to make sure that the Chinese students are protected,"

See SABLON on Page 8

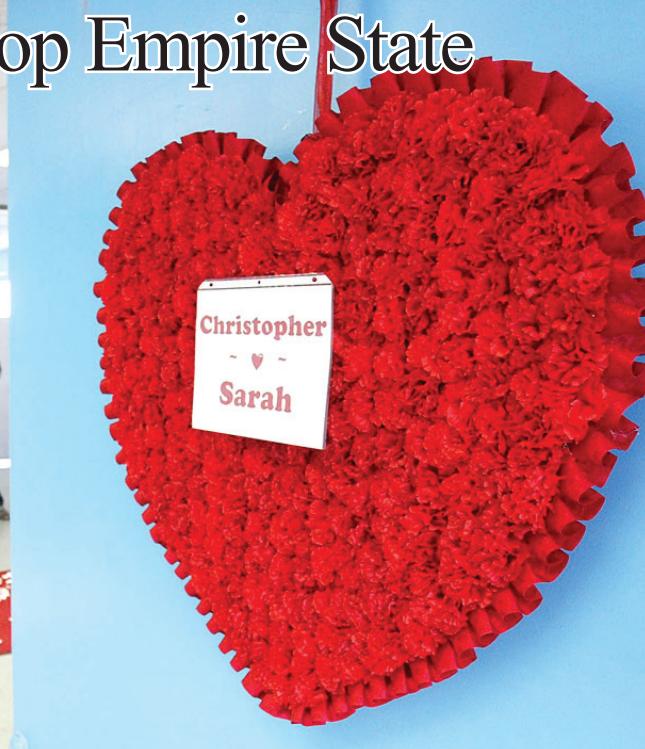
34 Valentines wed atop Empire State

By JENNIFER FRIEDLIN
AP WRITER

Torsten Sellheim chose a 10,000-foot peak in the Austrian Alps to propose to longtime girlfriend Christiane Duve. On Saturday, the couple took their relationship to new heights when they said "I do" in a sun-drenched lobby on the 80th floor of the Empire State Building.

The German newlyweds were among 17 couples from Brooklyn to Wellstone, New Zealand, who exchanged Valentine's Day wedding vows in the romantic city landmark immortalized in such films as "Love Affair" and "Sleepless

See 34 VALENTINES on Page 8



No claimers for \$16,000-bounty

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

No one got the \$16,000 bounty put up to solve the I-Connect explosion last Feb. 7, since identification and apprehension of the three suspects appeared to be a product of pure investigative work.

The reward pool—\$10,000 from I-Connect, \$5,000 from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and \$1,000 from the CNMI Crime Stoppers—was put up to encourage those with knowledge of the crime to provide investigators with information leading to the suspects' arrest.

"I think the arrest was made purely by the FBI and other investigators," said I-Connect general manager Manny Andaya, who lauded探者 for the quick

See NO on Page 8

Local

Permanent residency for stateless persons gets support

The lawyer representing the CNMI's "stateless" individuals in their pursuit for U.S. citizenship expressed support yesterday to the House of Representatives' proposal to grant them permanent residency status.

Reynaldo Yana vowed to pursue the cause of the stateless

individuals, disclosing that he had filed an appellate brief before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit regarding the issue. The appeal seeks to reverse the ruling of the U.S. District Court denying these individuals U.S. citizenship.

Stateless individuals are those born in the CNMI be-

tween 1978 and 1986. Although most of them were born and raised here, their lack of U.S. citizenship has prevented them from enjoying the benefits accorded U.S. citizens, such as educational scholarships. These individuals have difficulty in competing in the local workforce and in

traveling outside the CNMI.

"In the meantime, I hope that they [lawmakers] pass the bill," Yana said.

House Speaker Benigno Fitial recently bared a resolution that seeks to grant stateless individuals permanent residency status. The Babauta administration also

assured support for lobby efforts before the U.S. Congress, so that these individuals could get U.S. citizenship through federal legislation.

Yana assured, though, that he would be working on getting a judicial declaration that the individuals rightfully deserve U.S. citizenship. Should the

appeal before the 9th Circuit fail to prosper, he said he would take the matter before the U.S. Supreme Court.

"We're asking everybody to pray," Yana said. The 9th Circuit has yet to schedule the oral arguments on the appeal before reaching a decision. (John Ravelo)

CUC: No stopping on desalination project

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. is now pursuing contract negotiations with Taekwang Heavy Industries on a desalination plant in Lower Base that would produce 3 million gallons of water a day.

This developed despite warnings from different agencies following findings of alleged irregularities in the project's solicitation process.

In an interview, CUC board chairman Herman P. Sablan said that the CUC management and Taekwang are negotiating the content of the proposed contract. In particular, he said that parties are now talking about water pricing.

"We are already under negotiation. It's unfair to stop this process. We believe that we applied the correct procurement process. So, there's no stopping [it]," said Sablan.

When asked, Sablan said that CUC does not intend to entertain the three other proposers, as earlier suggested by the Attorney General's Office.

"That's only an opinion. There's a procurement [process] to be followed," said Sablan.

In a opinion sent to CUC last month, Deputy Attorney General Clyde Lemons Jr. said that CUC

could keep the existing Request for Proposal for the project, but it should ensure "fairness" by also talking with the other proposers: USA Mitsui, GET Inc., and Telesource.

He reiterated, though, that CUC should hold off its negotiations with Taekwang pending further analysis of the project.

Earlier, the Office of the Public Auditor and the House Committee on Public Utilities, Transportation, and Communications recommended the immediate cancellation of the proposed project, citing "tainted actions" on the part of CUC.

OPA cited that a July 9, 2003 pre-RFP agreement between the CUC board chairman and Taekwang "destroys the concept of a valid, competitive, and unbiased RFP, as required by both CUC and the CNMI Procurement Regulations."

Taekwang's draft contract proposes to sell 3 million gallons of water a day to CUC at \$7.98 per 1,000 gallons or some \$131 million to \$136 million in 15 years. It turned out that this was the highest rate submitted among four proposers.

Taekwang executives, represented locally by businessman Ed Guerrero, have hinted, though, that the water rate can be reduced, noting that the original price is subject to negotiation.



FOOD SAFETY ADVOCATES

An informal awarding of certificates and tokens was held at the staff canteen of the Dai-Ichi Hotel Saipan Beach on Feb. 7, 2004 for the 36 kitchen employees who completed and passed the Food Safety Training Program conducted from Nov. 25 to Dec. 17, 2003. The training program aims to further improve the kitchen hygiene standards of the hotel and ensure the safety of food served to guests.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Foreign investment office proposed

The chairman of the House Committee on Commerce and Tourism is proposing to establish a new Department of Commerce wing that

will focus solely on foreign investments.

Dubbed the Office of Foreign Investment Assistance Act of 2004 or House Bill

14-65, the proposed division would be headed by a director appointed by the Commerce secretary, and would be staffed by a number of personnel deemed necessary to run the office.

The proposed office's mandate is to assist foreign investors with a long-term business certificate or a foreign investment certificate in obtaining all the permits and licenses required by various government agencies in an expeditious manner.

According to the bill, the assistance shall extend to, among others, help in obtaining information and documents from government agencies; help in filling out applications for government permits and licenses and other requirements; routing of applications through the government departments and agencies on behalf of the alien investor, to name few.

The proposed Commerce division may enter into agreements with other government agencies to establish procedures for expediting the dissemination of information for foreign investors and the processing of permitting/licensing applications.

The bill, authored by Rep. Ray Yumul, is eyeing to tap into resources allotted to the



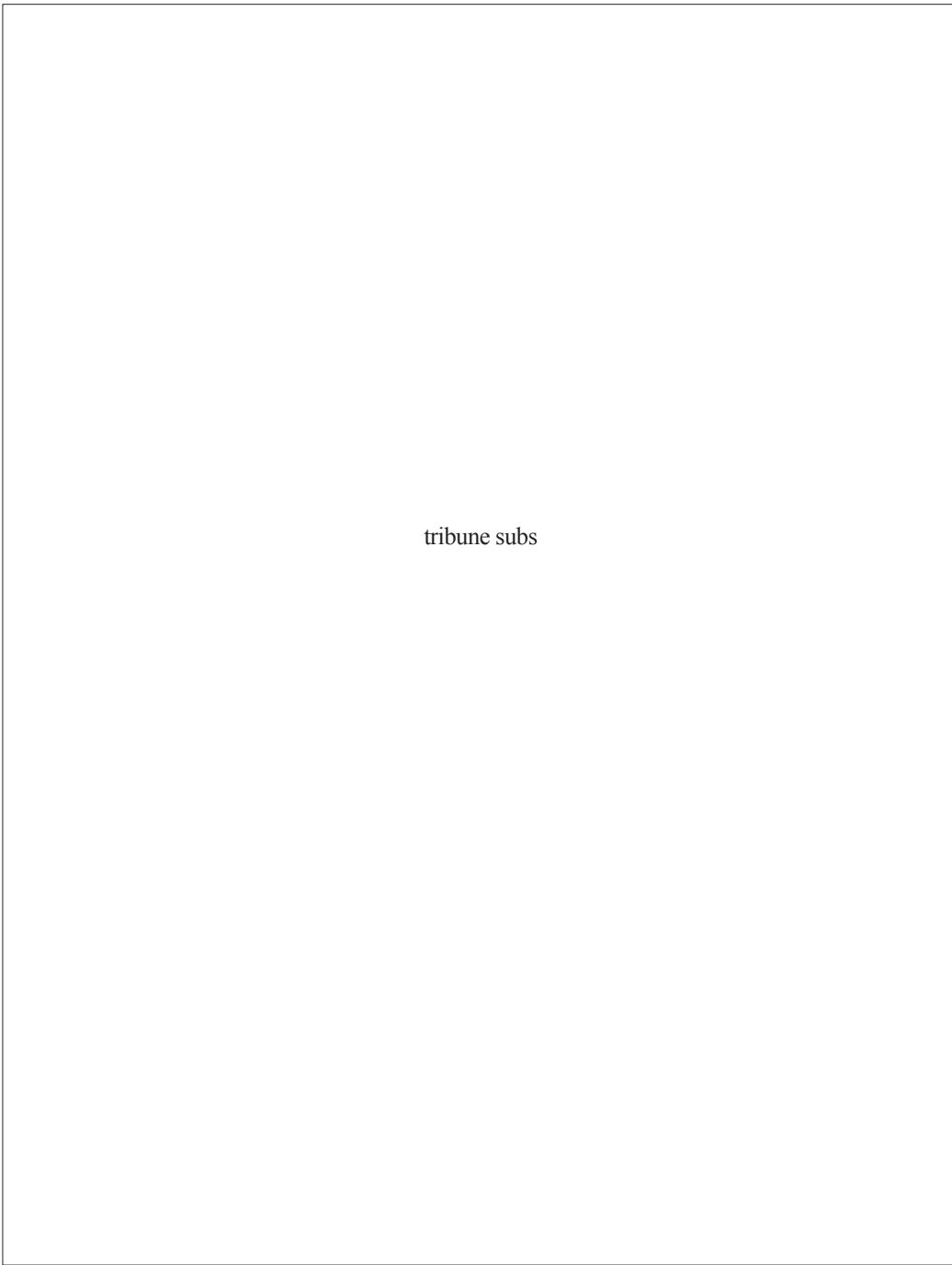
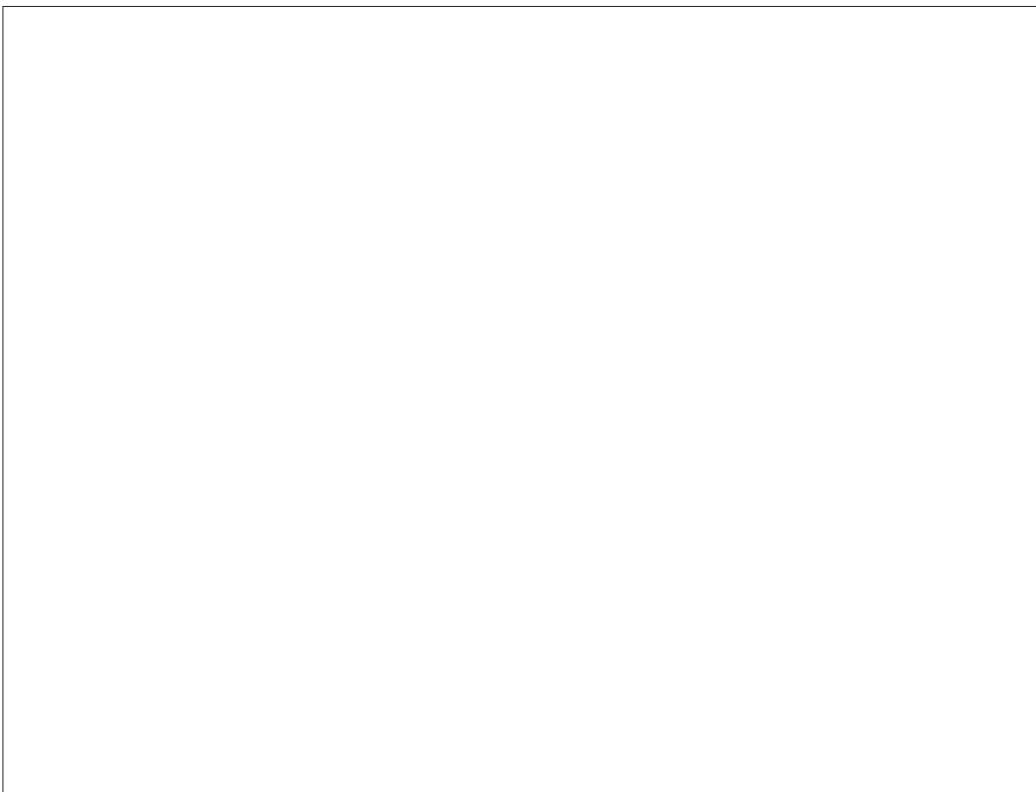
Yumul

Commerce Department as initial funding to operate the new office. Afterwards, the bill indicates that the governor may reprogram funds beyond the restrictions of 1 CMC § 7402 to ensure that full funding be granted to the Office of Foreign Investment Assistance.

The proposal to establish a foreign investment assistance office is parallel to the years-long goal to streamline the process of business licensing applications, specifically to remove hassles for foreign investors.

Business owners have repeatedly clamored to remove bureaucracy in the business license application process.

Government officials themselves have concurred that the process has become redundant and needs fixing. (Marian A. Maraya)





NEW MPLA BOARD MEMBER

Newly sworn-in member of Marianas Public Land Authority Board of Directors Benita Manglona, left, poses with board chair Ana Demapan-Castro and vice chair Manny Villagomez. Manglona, a CPA, replaced her brother, former justice Pedro M. Atalig, on the board.

LIBERTY DONES

House backs technical school idea

The House of Representatives has embraced the concept of developing Marianas High School as a model campus for career and technical education/training by adopting House Resolution 14-4 consistent with this purpose.

Minority Leader Heinz S. Hofschneider is, however, convinced that such efforts would have more force and effect if tackled through legislation.

Rep. Justo S. Quitugua, chairman of the House Committee on Education, assured that the resolution is only the first of many steps to follow, in HR 14-4's overarching goal that is to create more skilled local workers.

"This is the initial step. We need the resolution before initiating the legislation," Quitugua told members during a discussion on the House Floor last week.

Rep. Arnold I. Palacios, who also threw his support behind HR 14-4's intent, suggested that the Public School System be given a timeline to accomplish the comprehensive study in determining the feasibility of establishing MHS as a model for a technical high school.

Quoting research findings by various U.S. organizations such as the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education at the University of Minnesota and the National Center for Education Statistics, Quitugua said that reform efforts that emphasize high content and performance standards for all students in both academic and technical subjects, the integration of academic and career-technical education, and contextualized, work-based learning greatly improve learning outcomes.

(Marian A. Maraya)

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(Marian A. Maraya)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE				
1/14/04	1/15/04	1/16/04	1/17/04	1/18/04
FRE 1001 07:00PM 07:00PM	FRE 1002 07:00PM 07:00PM	FRE 1003 07:00PM 07:00PM	FRE 1004 07:00PM 07:00PM	FRE 1005 07:00PM 07:00PM
FRE 1006 07:00PM 07:00PM	FRE 1007 07:00PM 07:00PM	FRE 1008 07:00PM 07:00PM	FRE 1009 07:00PM 07:00PM	FRE 1010 07:00PM 07:00PM
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FRE 1026 07:00PM 07:00PM	FRE 1027 07:00PM 07:00PM	FRE 1028 07:00PM 07:00PM	FRE 1029 07:00PM 07:00PM	FRE 1030 07:00PM 07:00PM
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Reduced cost for telehealth, telemedicine pushed

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
ASSISTANT EDITOR

The "urban" classification of Saipan, Tutuila in American Samoa, and Agana in Guam by the Federal Communications Commission is preventing these American territories from availing of reduced telemedicine and telehealth costs, as provided under the Communications Act of 1934.

To correct this inequity, Guam Delegate Madeleine Z. Bordallo has introduced a measure in the U.S. Congress that seeks for the correct treatment of these territories as "rural areas" in the health care service supports provided under the Act and designates Honolulu, Hawaii as the nearest urban area.

H.R. 3750, or the Pacific Insular Areas Rural Telemedicine Act has been referred to the Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet of the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

Besides Bordallo, the bill is also co-sponsored by American Samoa Rep. Eni Faleomavaega, Hawaii Rep. Neil Abercrombie, Puerto Rico Rep. Anibal Acevedo-Vila, and U.S. Virgin Islands Rep. Donna M. Christensen.

The Rural Health Care Program is a universal service support mechanism that provides reduced rates to rural health care providers for telecommunications services related to the use of telemedicine and telehealth.

According to the Telemedicine Research Center website, telemedicine is the use of telecommunications to provide medical information and services. It could be as simple as two doctors discussing a case over the phone, or as sophisticated as using videoconferencing technology.

Currently, the RHCP can fund up to \$400 million annually to ensure that rural health care providers pay no more than those in urban areas for the same or similar telecommunication services. This support is determined based on mileage or a comparison of urban and rural rates.

Under the mileage-based support, the RHCP will pay the difference in charges between the standard urban distance (SUD) for each state and the maximum allowable distance (MAD).

Under the urban/rural rate comparison, the RHCP will support the difference between the rural health care provider's charges and what the rural health care provider would have been charged if it were located in an urban area of the state.

The designation of an "urban area" and "rural area" determines which health care providers and carriers are eligible for support under the RHCP.

In her remarks prior to introducing the bill, Bordallo explained that, in its initial rulemaking for the RHCP, the Federal Communications Commission designated the urban areas for Pacific insular areas to be Tutuila in American Samoa, Agana in Guam, and Saipan in the CNMI.

"These designations were made despite the fact that none of these cities have a population of over 50,000, the threshold used by the FCC in making an urban area designation for a state," she said.

By defining the jurisdictions' capital cities as the "urban area" for the RHCP, Bordallo said the health care providers in these insular areas have been informed that the RHCP telecommunication discounts would only be applicable to interconnecting health care facilities in remote locations within their jurisdictions.

"For Guam, there are no health care facilities that would benefit from this definition. For American Samoa and the CNMI, the only health care facilities that would qualify are those located on remote islands within the political boundaries of their territories," she pointed out.

The populations of these insular areas are approximately 57,000 for American Samoa, 155,000 for Guam, and 69,000 for the CNMI.

"These jurisdictions, in their entirety, are classified as 'rural areas' and qualify for the rural development programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The FCC designation of the capital cities of these jurisdictions as "urban" has prevented the HCPs in these remote, rural areas access to much needed services," Bordallo said.

The Guam delegate pointed out that residents of Guam, American Samoa, and the CNMI contribute to the Universal Service Fund and represent the types of communities that were envisioned to be served by the RHCP.

"The health care providers in the Pacific insular areas are in need of telecommunication connections with health care providers and with health professions education programs outside of their jurisdictions in order to obtain needed specialty services and access to advanced health professions education and continuing education programs.

"However, the current costs of these telecommunication connections are too high to make the connections feasible. The [RHCP], the program that was designed to serve rural communities and which would make such a critical difference in these jurisdictions, currently does not benefit those most in need," said Bordallo.



THE WAITING'S DONE

Gov. Juan N. Babauta, center, poses with the first batch of land owners who received their long overdue compensation from the government Friday. They included Vicente P. Agulto, Virginia Cruz, Ana F. Lizama, and Jose Q. Babauta. Also in photo are Saipan Rep. Heinz Hofschneider, 2nd right, MPLA Commissioner Henry S. Hofschneider, 3rd right, and MPLA board chair Ana D. Castro, left.

bank of hawaii
cmyk
2/16

Opinion

Saipan Tribune

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EDITORIAL



\$5.6M needed to remove oil from sunken WWII tanker

Nearly 60 years after World War II, the 553-foot USS Mississinewa is no longer a threat to this remote Western Pacific atoll.

The U.S. Navy removed two million gallons of oil from the war wreck, and removed the environmental risk to vital subsistence fishing waters that 1,000 people here depend on for protein.

The Navy spent \$5.6 million on the project, said Navy spokeswoman Lt. Cmdr. Thurraya Kent. A portion of the cost was recovered in reselling the oil.

The Mississinewa was sunk in 1944 by a one-man Japanese suicide submarine in Ulithi Lagoon, the heart of this undeveloped outer island group of Yap State in the Federated States of Micronesia.

The vessel had lain dormant in this pristine lagoon for 57 years until a storm jarred it in August, 2001. Oil slicked the lagoon and fouled nearby beaches. Yap officials declared a state of emergency and issued a fishing ban.

"The beaches were covered with oil. It was right in the middle of our biggest supply of fish," said Ulithi Atoll Chief John Rulmal.

The Mississinewa oil spill caused a wave of panic not only in Micronesia, but across in the Pacific islands where thousands of World War II vessels were sunk.

The fear was the wrecks, structurally compromised and nearing 60 years of age, were corroding. The spills would

become more and more common and could threaten large areas of ocean, environmentalists said.

A recent South Pacific Regional Environment Program survey of the entire Pacific revealed there were as many as 3,850 wrecks, 8 percent of which are tankers or oilers, and there were large concentrations in Micronesia, the Solomon Islands and the Philippines. There are 150 shipwrecks in Micronesia alone, with 48 in Chuuk Lagoon.

More than 86 percent of the World War II vessels sunk in the Pacific are Japanese.

The task to clean up a spill or remove the oil from a ship is formidable for small-budget, developing

island states. But foreign nations have not been eager to assume liability for costly clean-ups or for the oil removal off their old ships.

It is yet unclear whether Mississinewa will set a precedent or be the exception to the rule.

Following the August Mississinewa leak, the U.S. Navy contracted divers to plunge the 130 feet to Mississinewa and seal the leak. But the vessel spewed oil again in late December, and oil spread about four miles out from the lagoon, Yap officials reported.

After both leaks, Yap officials said the vessel was an environmental time bomb and the state government did not have the funds to remove the oil. After

the second leak, recognizing the potential environmental hazard, military officials said the Navy would begin long-term plans of removing the oil.

U.S. Navy teams arrived aboard the USS Salvor early last year, along with a U.S. Coast Guard boat and four contracted vessels and barges.

While the Navy was in Ulithi, a memorial service was held over the wreck site to honor the 63 Americans lost on the Mississinewa, Kent said. A week later, sailors built a permanent memorial a few miles from the Mississinewa.

"We appreciate very much what the Navy has done for the safety, health and environment of Ulithi," Rulmal said. (PDN/PIR)

American Samoa to testify in free trade query

The economic impact of the United States providing duty free status for tuna imports from Andean countries is the subject of an investigative hearing today by a U.S. agency.

Congressman Faleomavaega Eni will be among the individuals scheduled to testify during the Washington D.C. hearing by the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC).

ITC said in a statement that the hearing was to seek input for a newly initiated investigation into the probable economic effect of a U.S. free trade agreement with the four beneficiary countries of the Andean Trade Preferences Act—Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

The investigation was requested by the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) in a letter received December 8, 2003.

In his letter to ITC, the USTR noted that the United States plans to pursue a free trade agreement with the Andean countries.

As requested by the USTR, the ITC will advise the President as to the probable economic effect of providing duty-free treatment for imports of products of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru (as a group) on industries in the United States producing like or directly competitive articles and on consumers.

As requested by the USTR, the ITC will also advise the President as to the probable economic effect of eliminating tariffs on imports of certain agricultural products of the Andean countries on U.S. industries producing like or directly competitive products and on the economy as a whole.

Secretary James U. Hofsneider, DPH medical director and CNMI Bioterrorism Preparedness Program director Richard Brostrom, DPH deputy secretary for hospital administration Jack Taitano, and Attorney General Pamela Brown.

The CNMI has been getting bioterrorism grants from CDC after the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks in the U.S.

Of over \$900 million national bioterror budget in 2002, about \$3 million went to Pacific territories, including the CNMI. The fund was meant to improve networking and surveillance of diseases, enhance laboratory capabilities, and train personnel.

Mendiola, 21, whom Guerrero allegedly hired to carry out the sabotage against I-Connect.

A crowbar and wire cutters recovered from the crime scene led to the confirmation of I-Connect's suspicion that business rivalry was behind the arson.

Both I-Connect and CSI operate two-way radio systems on Saipan and Guam.

Andaya estimated that I-Connect took away some 70 percent of CSI's customers on Saipan when it began local operations. The FBI traced where the hardware tools were bought and the identity of those who purchased them.

Faleomavaega's Washington D.C. Office said the Congressman will testify at the hearing set for Feb. 10.

The congressman's office said the "intent of testimony is to protect our tuna industry, and a few items" that will be coming out later this month but the office could not comment further on it.

Samoa News has been unable to confirm if anyone else from American Samoa, especially the two tuna canneries will also testify.

American Samoa's canneries process about 950 tons of tuna per day which is equivalent to 22,800 tons of tuna or 20.5 million cases per year and the Territory is currently home to the largest tuna processing operation in the world. (*Samoa News/PIR*)

Late last year, the DPH said it received some \$1.3 million in federal grants to prevent infectious diseases, bioterror attacks, and other public health emergencies. It included some \$654,000 funding from CDC to upgrade infectious disease surveillance and investigation in the CNMI.

"The idea is to enhance the readiness of the hospitals' response to bioterror attacks, infectious diseases, and other public health emergencies," DPH said.

The remaining amount of over \$612,000 came from the Department of Health and Human Services to improve CHC's patient capacity, isolation capacity, and staffing system.

Department of Public Safety commissioner Edward Camacho also said the solution of the case was "the product of traditional police work and technology."

The explosion destroyed I-Connect's radio room and communications equipment owned by the FBI and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Guerrero admitted hiring the two other suspects to set the I-Connect facility on fire and added that he supplied them gasoline, which caused the blast, according to the FBI.

SABLAM

From Page 1

said Sablan.

Sablan said he had mentioned it to Gov. Juan N. Babauta when he arrived over the weekend and that the governor was concerned about the negative publicity.

Earlier, local authorities, including the Northern Marianas College, acknowledged that the SU problem, which affected nearly 100 Chinese students, would have a negative effect on the promotion of NMC's Pacific Gateway project.

The Gateway project, which begins in January 2005, aims to attract foreign students, mostly from China, to study at NMC.

The SU students who had filed complaints against SU officials with local and federal authorities are now working, after the government issued them temporary work authorizations.

The former students, who had been

out of school since middle of December 2003, were asked to vacate their apartment in Susupe in late January this year. At that time, many of them have found work on island, mostly in the garment industry.

Wang Rui, one of the former students, said recently that they preferred to stay on-island pending the resolution of their court case against SU officials.

The students have accused SU founder Park Soon Kyun of deception and cheating. They said Park and other SU recruiters promised them a state-of-the-art university in the CNMI and jobs that would earn them up to \$1,500 a month while studying at SU.

Park has been arrested and is in the custody of federal authorities. SU had closed down. Over 80 former SU students remain on island.

The students earlier said they incurred thousands of dollars in debt in China to enroll with SU.

34 VALENTINES

From Page 1

in Seattle."

"Torsten likes to be high above and have a long view of everything," said Mrs. Sellheim, from Lubeck, Germany. "This was the perfect spot."

The Empire State Building, which holds weddings throughout the year, has performed more than 170 Valentine's Day affairs since the tradition began a decade ago.

The free nuptials come with a walk to the altar on a red carpet strewn with pink and white flower petals, a musician playing wedding standards on a keyboard and a ceremony performed by a nondenominational minister wearing red, fuzzy slippers with hearts.

Each year, building administrators receive upward of 30 written requests for a Valentine's Day wedding. Only about half of the most heartfelt ones are satisfied.

"I like somebody who puts across a real romantic feeling. I love her so much, I love him so much, I love the building so much and I just have to get married there," said Empire State

Building spokeswoman Lydia Ruth.

After each ceremony, the bride and groom—some decked out in floor-length gowns and tuxedos, others in street clothes—received a champagne toast as well as a stuffed King Kong teddy bear dressed in a red T-shirt emblazoned with a heart surrounding the newlyweds' names.

The couples were escorted to the 86th-floor observation deck, where they kissed and canoodled while a swarm of journalists intruded on the moment.

Some seemed blissfully oblivious to the attention. Lauralee and Tom Rivello of Wantagh, N.Y., were among the initial 34 couples who married in the Empire State Building back in 1994.

On Saturday, they returned to renew their vows.

"It seemed like a good way to celebrate our anniversary," said Tom Rivello, before he and his wife headed to lunch at the romantic Cafe des Artistes restaurant.

"Like the building itself, which has been here for so many years and has a strong, solid foundation, so should marriage."



A BEAUTIFUL WELCOME

Members of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, Marianas Visitors Authority, Veteran's Affairs Office, and the beautiful contestants for this year's Miss CNMI pageant came out to greet the visitors on board the USS Decatur on Saturday, February 12, 2004. From left: Alex Sablan, SCC president; Mike Schadeck, AFC chairperson and SCC director; Judge David Wiseman; 2004 Miss CNMI candidates; Ruth Coleman, VAO; and Ed Johnson of MVA.

Wanted 'King of Atlantis' not in Palau

The Palau government said Sheikh Yakub Al-Skeikh, who is wanted in the United States for wire fraud, money laundering, income tax evasion and false statement charges, is not in the country.

President Tommy Remengesau made this announcement after the U.S. government requested Ibrahim's deportation and extradition.

Remengesau said the U.S. government must have thought that Ibrahim was part of a delegation that visited Palau, claiming to represent the "United Kingdom of Atlantis." The delegation said Ibrahim is the king of "Atlantis."

"Ibrahim was never in Palau," Remengesau said.

According to a statement from Remengesau, Ibrahim was charged in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas.

Ibrahim is believed to have multiple passports and aliases.

Remengesau said the "kingdom" recently offered Palau a \$100 million

loan at a low interest rate.

The delegation claimed that their kingdom is located northwest of Australia, east of Papua New Guinea, southwest of the Solomons and west of Vanuatu.

Remengesau said he was told by the Taiwan and Philippine ambassadors that they have no treaties with the kingdom contrary to the delegation's claim.

Further, Remengesau said, when the coordinates of the kingdom as claimed by the delegation were plugged into a computer software used by patrol boats, no land mass was shown.

He said the delegation's offer of a \$100 million soft loan is "too good to be true that it cannot be real."

In exchange for the loan, the delegation said money from Palau was needed up-front.

Remengesau said the delegation wanted Palau to sign several treaties, which would include the recognition of their kingdom. (*Palau Horizon/PIR*)

MTEC has 3 new board members

The Marianas Tourism Education Council, a nonprofit organization promoting community awareness on the importance of the visitor industry in the CNMI, has three new board members.

Mark Swinton, Dai-Ichi Hotel general manager; Larry Lee, Tourism and Hospitality instructor at the Northern Marianas College's Business Department; and Ray Dela Cruz of the Tinian Mayor's Office's tourism and promotions desk, have accepted MTEC's request for them to be part of the board.

Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Jonas Ogren said the addition of three more members is expected to further strengthen efforts in fostering community understanding and support for the tourism sector.

"This is great," said Ogren, who is also the MTEC board's interim president. "We now have a bigger representation of a cross-section of

the community, and we will be moving forward."

MTEC was established on the belief that for the CNMI to stay competitive in the regional tourism market, it is crucial to have off-island promotional efforts complemented with an equally aggressive campaign in the community.

To achieve this, it has spearheaded the formation of school-based tourism organizations called Marianas Youth WAVE Clubs, which so far has a general membership of over 500 students in the Public School System, including Tinian and Rota.

MTEC also has several activities lined up including seminars for frontline government employees about the hospitality industry.

"MTEC believes it is vital that the people of the community have a good understanding and appreciation of the

importance of the tourism industry, how it relates to the economy of the CNMI, and how it affects their daily lives," said Ogren.

By making the local community realize that they also are stakeholders in the industry, it is hoped that they would get involved in the overall effort to promote the CNMI as a major destination, Ogren said.

Other officials and members of the board are Rita Sablan, Public School System associate commissioner and MTEC secretary; James Whitt, Ernst & Young partner, MTEC treasurer; Marian Aldan-Pierce, Duty Free Shoppers-Saipan Ltd. president; Tony V. Deleon Guerrero, NMC Development and Alumni Relations director; Yoichi Matsumura, Pacific Development Inc. general manager; and Rex Moses, Coral Ocean Point assistant general manager.

Learning to do business, Guam style

On the first day of SET Pacific's contract to supply electricity to military installations on Guam, most of the locks were removed in the company's doors.

"We did so because all of us had to learn how to trust each other," said Rita Miller, the company's chief executive officer.

For Miller, doing business on Guam has been a long learning process that has yet to stop.

But she has gained recognition for her business skills as the recipient of the small business person of the year award issued recently by the U.S. Small Business Administration on Guam.

SET Pacific, a subcontractor to Raytheon Technical Services Guam, provides the high-voltage electrical system maintenance and repair for Naval Station and Andersen Air Force base. The company's contract for both military installations began in April 2000.

With more than 60 employees, only three of whom are not local hires, the company counts its speedy, two-week restoration of power after Super Typhoon Pongsona in December 2002 as among its triumphs.

The company also operates boilers that make steam for Navy ships and generate millions of gallons a month

of demineralized water for the boilers on the ships.

But before the company was able to do any work, Miller said it was difficult getting a loan to start the company.

"To secure a contract this size, it takes considerable resources," Miller said. "Our proposal writing took us two years, and it cost us \$300,000. So when we started up, we were \$300,000 in debt."

After a loan from Bank of Hawaii, SET Pacific was able to operate more than 400 miles of overhead and underground power lines to the Naval Station and Andersen from several SET Pacific power generators.

But for Miller, the challenges of doing business on Guam were less financial and more cultural.

Hailing from Tulsa, Okla., Miller and her husband Jay moved to Guam 14 years ago and started a construction company that did contract work for the Guam Waterworks Authority.

"We had the technology set, but we didn't understand how to do business here," Miller said. "How people worked, what their philosophies were, it was a slow learning process before we could begin to grasp."

Miller said a key aspect of life on the island she was out of touch

Guam style

with—at first—was the importance of the Catholic Church.

"Productivity to me is different here because I didn't factor in the Church," Miller said. "There are rosaries, and bereavement time and family issues we're not confronted with in the states. The Chamorro families have been so gracious to us to help us understand a better way to conduct business here."

Miller's biggest concern now is the future of her work force, or possible lack thereof.

She feels the lack of specialized training on Guam will be detrimental, not only to her company, but to other businesses that require special skills.

"Our average employee age is 46," Miller said. "Our oldest employee is 80 years old. He's a boiler tender, and we have no one here on Guam to replace him."

Miller said she's tried to work out partnerships for an apprenticeship program, but has had no luck so far.

She said despite winning the SBA award, the true honor goes to her employees, whom she considers her family.

"They come in 24 hours a day," Miller said. "If the lights blink, they come in. If the winds blow, they come in. Our employees are the most important asset of this company." (*PDN/PIR*)

Community Briefs

Sinapalo school gets \$200 donation

The Yoang Corporation on Saipan donated \$200 to the Sinapalo Elementary School as part of its participation in the education tax credit program.

School Principal Carmen H. Atalig expressed her "deepest appreciation and thankfulness" to Yoang Corporation for its generous contribution.

The donation would help fund some of the student activity program at SES, she added.

DES raffle draw postponed

The Dandan Elementary School has postponed its 6th Annual Cultural Day Raffle Drawing and Festivities from Feb. 14 to May 22.

"We apologize for the inconvenience this has brought upon the parents and others who have made efforts to participate in this school function. On behalf of the administration, teachers, parents, students, and the PTA officers of their school community, we thank you for your understanding and continued support in every way possible," said the school in a media statement.

Veterans of Saipan, Tinian battles sought

Veterans of the World War II battles of Saipan and Tinian will be invited to the commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Battle for Saipan and Tinian to be held June 12-16, 2004 on Saipan.

The Committee for the Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of WWII is soliciting help from newspapers, churches, state and local chapters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Veterans Associations, non-profit organizations, and family members to help identify veterans to be recognized.

Anyone who knows a veteran involved in these battles should send their name and contact information

to Jessica Jordan at marianas04-anniversary@yahoo.com, or call (670) 234-7212; fax: (670) 234-7211, or mail: PMB 409 Box 10000 Saipan MP 96950.

Victim hotline volunteers sought

Do you want to make a difference? Do you want to help out our community? Are you interested in issues such as domestic violence, child physical and sexual abuse, rape, or suicide?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, then you may be the right kind of person to become a Victim Hotline Volunteer. The Victim Hotline is a 24/7 telephone crisis intervention hotline that provides access to information, referral, and a listening ear to victims of crimes in the Northern Marianas.

Interested individuals may contact Velma Del Rosario at 234-5100.

Public library to close periodically

Joeten-Kiyu Public Library is having new air conditioning units installed and would like to inform the public that the library will be closing periodically until the work is completed.

"We will make every effort to inform the public ahead of time, however, we encourage the public to call 235-7322/3 before visiting the library or for more information on closing dates. We apologize for any inconvenience as work is being done to improve the library facility," the library administration said in a media statement.

Military ID cardholders survey on

The Office of Military/Veterans Affairs is conducting a survey on all military ID cardholders, whose ID cards are expiring within the next six months and are in need of assistance. Please call 664-2650 for more information. There is a big change in obtaining and renewing procedures.

Business

Experts warn of Microsoft 'monoculture'

By JUSTIN POPE
AP BUSINESS WRITER

Dan Geer lost his job, but gained his audience. The very idea that got the computer security expert fired has sparked serious debate in information technology. The idea, borrowed from biology, is that Microsoft Corp. has nurtured a software "monoculture" that threatens global computer security.

Geer and others believe Microsoft's software is so dangerously pervasive that a virus capable of exploiting even a single flaw in its operating systems could wreak havoc.

Just this past week, Microsoft warned customers about security problems that independent experts called among the most serious yet disclosed. Network administrators could only hope users would download the latest patch.

After he argued in a paper published last fall that the monoculture amplifies online threats, Geer was fired by security firm @stake Inc., which has had Microsoft as a major client.

Geer insists there's been a silver lining to his dismissal. Once it got discussed on Slashdot.org and other online forums, the debate about Microsoft's ubiquity gained in prominence.

"No matter where I look I seem to

be stumbling over the phrase 'monoculture' or some analog of it," Geer, 53, said in a recent interview in his Cambridge home.

In biology, species with little genetic variation—or "monocultures"—are the most vulnerable to catastrophic epidemics. Species that share a single fatal flaw could be wiped out by a virus that can exploit that flaw. Genetic diversity increases the chances that at least some of the species will survive every attack.

"When in doubt, I think of, 'how does nature work?'" said Geer, a talkative man with mutton chop sideburns and a doctorate in biostatistics from Harvard University. (The interest persists in his hobby of backyard beekeeping.)

"Which leads you, when you think about shared risk, to think about monoculture, which leads you to think about epidemic. Because the idea of an epidemic is not radically different from what we're talking about with the Internet."

Geer isn't the first to argue that the logic of living viruses also applies to the computer variety, and that the dominance and tight integration of Microsoft operating systems and software makes the global computing ecosystem vulnerable to a cascading failure.



got fired because @stake wanted to be nice to their masters. But it's like the Christian Church boycotting a movie - everybody wants to see it now."

Microsoft, which denies pressuring @stake to fire Geer, says the comparison between computers and living organisms works only so well.

"Once you start down the road with that analogy, you get stuck in it," said Scott Charney, chief security strategist for Redmond, Wash.-based Microsoft.

Charney says monoculture theory doesn't suggest any reasonable solutions; more use of the Linux open-source operating system, a rival to Microsoft Windows, might create a "duoculture," but that would hardly deter sophisticated hackers.

True diversity, Charney said, would require thousands of different operating systems, which would make integrating computer systems and networks virtually impossible. Without a Microsoft monoculture, he said, most of the recent progress in information technology could not have happened.

Another difference: computers can be unplugged from the network and rebooted; organisms cannot.

The theory also has skeptics outside of Microsoft.

Computer security specialist Dan Geer poses for a photograph at his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Wednesday, Feb. 4, 2004. Dan Geer lost his job, but drew a lot of attention to the idea that got him fired.

Geer's paper did little more than make the point with particular fervor—which only intensified when Geer was fired.

"The hoopla around him losing his job gave the story some extra frisson," said Internet security expert Bruce Schneier, a co-author of Geer's. "He

Fighting Internet crime

By LAURA SULLIVAN
THE BALTIMORE SUN

Sitting at his home in Virginia Beach, Va., Joe Yuhasz almost reached for his wallet when an e-mail message popped into his inbox and told him America Online needed to verify his credit card information.

The site linked to the e-mail looked identical to AOL's billing center, until Yuhasz noticed the domain name was a fake—a scam commonly known as phishing. Most people recognizing a possible scam would have deleted the message and moved on. But Yuhasz, a cybercrime specialist for the FBI, had other plans.

The ensuing investigation led to the conviction of two people, the last of whom was sentenced three weeks ago to four years in prison, and netted hundreds of stolen credit card numbers from across the United States.

This type of scam, which tricks people through fake Web sites and sob stories into giving up their credit card and bank numbers, is threatening to swamp the bureau's Internet crime center with the volume of attacks.

And while once the scams were the product of a few small-time hackers or anti-establishment loners here in the United States, FBI officials and computer experts are seeing growing signs that the culprits are members of organized crime and terrorist support groups, almost all of whom are working from abroad.

"It has been significantly increasing month after month," says Dan Larkin, chief of the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center. "United States citizens and businesses are very attractive targets for the world. We're getting clobbered."

The e-mails, which ask people to "update" their personal informa-

tion—Social Security numbers, dates of birth, passwords and the like—or tell a well-concocted tale meant to trick people into divulging their credit card and bank account numbers, now comprise more than half of the 15,000 monthly citizen complaints filed to the FBI's Internet crime center.

The scams have become the single most prevalent crime on the Internet, experts say, and they have become markedly more sophisticated over the past few months.

FBI officials suspect the scammers' growing skill is a sign not of a learning curve but of the introduction of more savvy and experienced criminals into the fraud schemes. Officials believe crime syndicates—especially in Russia and the former Soviet bloc—have begun to realize how much money they can make with little or no overhead.

They also believe terrorist sympathizers, possibly operating out of Africa and the Middle East, have also begun using phishing schemes to steal identities and make fast cash after being shut out by counterterrorism measures from their traditional avenues of funding such as bogus charities.

While only 0.01 percent of all computer users respond to regular spam, as many as 5 percent of phishing recipients message back.

Until recently, there has been little law enforcement could do to catch phishers abroad. Most host countries have had little interest in devoting resources to stopping the elusive practice.

One criminal can send a million e-mails within minutes with a single list—and many of the e-mails now contain electronic "trap doors" that allow phishers access to company or personal e-mail lists containing hundreds of thousands more names.

Technologies aid digital photo sharing

By MATTHEW FORDAHL
AP TECHNOLOGY WRITER

Bob Carlin enjoys the simplicity of snapping photos with his digital camera and has amassed a considerable collection of shots from parties, car shows and Yosemite. His complaint isn't about taking pictures, it's what to do with them afterward.

Carlin, who lives in a suburb south of San Francisco, finds sharing pictures by e-mail to be clunky at best. Posting them to a Web site so his friends and family can view them is too time consuming. Exchanging prints by regular mail is oh so 20th century.

He's been testing a new service called ShareALot that tries to simplify sharing over the Internet. To send a picture, he drops a photo into a folder on his PC, and it automatically

appears in folders on the PCs of friends he's designated as recipients.

"The user interface needs a little bit of work, but the actual mechanism of how the product works is really, really good," he said.

ShareALot is among a trio of upcoming products that seek to simplify picture sharing with remote friends and family. They'll be featured along with other emerging technologies at this week's DEMO conference in Scottsdale, Ariz.

ShareALot, OurPictures and PhotoSite take different approaches. The first two connect senders and recipients, passing the pictures through servers but not keeping them there. PhotoSite stores photos on its servers but simplifies posting.

There's growing demand as digital camera sales take off. InfoTrends Research Group forecasts global ship-

ments will jump to 53 million in 2004 from 41 million in 2003. By comparison, film camera shipments are expected to fall to 36 million in 2004 from 48 million last year.

When it becomes publicly available this week, for PCs and Macs, ShareALot will be a free download, said founder John Mathon. However, he said ShareALot will eventually charge for yet-unannounced premium services.

If someone with the software attempts to share with someone who doesn't have it installed, an e-mail is sent inviting that user to join the network.

The photos, which are automatically compressed, aren't stored on a ShareALot server unless the end user is not online. In that case, they're kept with ShareALot until the recipient comes online.

Gas prices climb 3.61 cents

Gasoline prices for all grades rose 3.61 cents in the past three weeks to a national average of \$1.68 per gallon, according to a report released Sunday.

With the latest increase, retail prices have risen more than 17 cents a gallon since late December. The Lundberg Survey of 8,000 stations nationwide was conducted Feb. 13.

The price of retail diesel fuel also increased 3 cents to a national average of \$1.69 per gallon.

Analyst Trilby Lundberg said several factors were responsible for the hike, including OPEC's decision to cut oil production by 1 million barrels a day beginning April 1, rising crude oil prices and cold weather that increased the demand for heating oil.

Lundberg said the rate of increase is slowing, compared to the previous two weeks before the survey, but there is no indication "prices have peaked or will fall anytime soon."

The national weighted average price of gasoline, including taxes, at self-serve pumps Friday was about \$1.65 for regular, \$1.75 for midgrade, and \$1.84 for premium. (AP)

Be nice to the intern

Want to be a chief executive real quick? Well first off, forget about quick. And second, stop changing jobs so often. Wendy Todaro of Forbes.com has this simple advice: "Watch your back and be kind—that intern in the awkward suit may just be the future boss."

At the 100 biggest companies, Forbes found that half the CEOs practically grew up on the job and 15 never worked anywhere else.

Being a "corporate mercenary" may not pay off: "Not one CEO has been with more than five companies in the span of their careers."

In the past, the best launch pads for future CEOs have been: McKinsey & Co. (a management consulting firm that likes to call itself a "leadership factory"; it's produced four), followed by scientific-equipment maker Becton Dickinson, General Electric, Philip Morris (now known as the Altria Group), Sears Roebuck, Southwestern Bell and drugmaker Wyeth (the old American Home Products), with two each. (Newsday)

Debt-ridden Calif. faces \$15B question

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE
AP BUSINESS WRITER

California is quickly running out of cash and bracing for acute financial pain following three years of political procrastination and budget bungling.

Now voters must decide if it makes more sense to approve a \$15 billion bailout bond that might extend the misery for a decade or more, or suffer it more intensely through temporary tax increases and deep spending cuts.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is trying to convince voters the bitter medicine should be dispensed gradually—that paying back the bailout bond over the next nine to 14 years is the most humane way for California to rehabilitate itself.

His opponents say California will be making a terrible mistake if it shoulders long-term debt to solve short-term problems.

In either case, it's clear the time has come for California

to balance its checkbook. The state will literally run out of money unless Schwarzenegger and the legislature find a way to produce \$14 billion to pay short-term notes due June 16.

If voters refuse to authorize the bond under Proposition 57 on the March 2 ballot, Schwarzenegger says he'll have to make "Armageddon" spending cuts that will make California a less desirable place to live.

Without the bailout bond, California's obligation to make the June 16 payment would compete with its duty to provide essential public services, said Timothy Blake, managing director of Moody's Investor Service, one of three major credit rating agencies. "That is not an orderly situation."

But Schwarzenegger's critics say the bond measure would place the state in a more perilous position, by limiting the money California can borrow in the future to pay for schools, roads and other quality-of-life

improvements needed to maintain home values and the state's economy, the sixth largest in the world.

"It will be another sign to business that California is stepping back from investing for the future," Stephen Levy, director of the Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy, wrote in his analysis of the deficit bond and its impact.

California's dilemma stems from its failure to reduce spending when the recession drained tax revenue. The poor financial management fueled the recall of Democratic Gov. Gray Davis, put the Democratic-led legislature on the defensive and left the state with a deficit the Republican Schwarzenegger estimates at \$22 billion.

Calif. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger gestures to the crowd during a state budget rally in a shopping mall in Tracy, Calif. in this Dec. 5, 2003 file photo.



AP

Commercial software aided reboot on Mars

By MATTHEW FORDAHL
AP TECHNOLOGY WRITER

It's a PC user's nightmare: You're almost done with a lengthy e-mail, or about to finish a report at the office, and the computer crashes for no apparent reason. It tries to restart but never quite finishes booting. Then it crashes again. And again.

Getting caught in such a loop is frustrating enough on Earth. But imagine what it's like when the computer is more than 100 million miles away on Mars. That's what mission controllers faced when the Mars rover Spirit stopped communicating last month.

Ultimately, the fix that saved Spirit wasn't that different from how a PC would be repaired on Earth. It's just that the folks who have their hardware on Mars—and the eyes of the world on them—are better prepared for disaster.

"The advantage of using commercial software is it's well-known, and it's well deployed,"

Tech support for an \$820 million mission is a cautious affair. Tools to recover from and fix any problem must be built into the system before launch. The systems' behaviors need to be completely understood and predictable.

"Luckily, during the design period, we anticipated that we might get into a situation like this," said Glenn Reeves, who oversees the software aboard the Mars rovers Spirit and Opportunity at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

For stability, reliability and predictability, mission designers did not bust the budget and design the hardware or software from scratch. Instead, they turned to hardware and software that's been used in space before and has a proven track record on Earth as well.

"The advantage of using commercial software is it's well-known, and it's well deployed,"

said Mike Deliman, an engineer at Alameda-based Wind River Systems Inc., which made the rovers' operating system. "It has been used throughout the world in hundreds of thousands of applications."

The operating system, VxWorks, has its roots in software developed to help Francis Ford Coppola gain more control over a film editing system. But the developers, David Wilner and Jerry Fiddler, saw a greater potential and eventually formed Wind River, named for the mountains in Wyoming. VxWorks became a formal product in 1987.

The operating system is embedded in systems that control jetliners and atomic colliders, anti-lock braking systems in cars and even heart pacemakers. It's also been used successfully in the Mars Pathfinder lander, Mars Odyssey orbiter and Stardust comet probe.

Coke probe winds on after 7 months

A government investigation into business practices at The Coca-Cola Co. continues seven months later, but several former federal prosecutors following the case say they wouldn't be surprised if no criminal charges are filed.

"From the things that I've seen, they've done an internal investigation that refuted many of the allegations. If that holds out and proves to be the case, I would expect the government to reach a similar conclusion," said Richard Deane, a former U.S. attorney in Atlanta.

Coke announced July 11 that federal prosecutors had launched a criminal investigation into fraud allegations raised in a lawsuit filed by a whistleblower against the world's largest beverage company. The Securities and Exchange Commission also is conducting a formal probe.

In his lawsuit, former Coke manager Matthew Whitley claimed Atlanta-based Coke rigged a marketing test. Coke has since admitted that some of its employees undermined the marketing test at Burger King restaurants in Virginia in 2000.

Coke's auditing committee, however, said it found

Report: Vodafone bids for AT&T wireless

Vodafone Group PLC has bid about \$35 billion for AT&T Wireless Services Inc., leaving the contest for the nation's third-largest mobile phone carrier a bidding war with Cingular Wireless. The Wall Street Journal reported Sunday on its Web site.

Because both offers are similar, AT&T Wireless is seeking a second round of offers from the companies, the newspaper reported, citing people close to the situation.

Nextel Communications Inc. and NTT DoCoMo Inc. of Japan didn't enter a bid, the newspaper's sources said. People

close to the situation said a choice of Vodafone or Cingular could come soon, though AT&T Wireless may take as long as two weeks to decide.

A spokesman for British giant Vodafone declined to comment Sunday on the reports. A week ago, Vodafone confirmed that it was pondering a bid for AT&T Wireless, based in Redmond, Wash. An AT&T Wireless spokesman, David Caouette, did not immediately return a call for comment by The Associated Press.

A Vodafone deal would require the British cell phone giant to sell its 45 percent stake in Verizon Wireless, the biggest

mobile phone company in the United States.

Verizon Communications chief executive Ivan Seidenberg has said his company would be pleased to assume full ownership of Verizon Wireless if Vodafone decided to pursue AT&T Wireless.

Although Verizon Wireless is the nation's No. 1 cellular company with 37.5 million subscribers, Vodafone has been discontent with its lack of control in a market as significant as the United States.

Atlanta-based Cingular is a joint venture between SBC Communications Inc. and BellSouth Corp. (AP)

no evidence of more serious allegations in the lawsuit, including Whitley's claim that Coke improperly shifted \$4 million of capital funding to a fountain project.

"Some people on the street might think that where there's smoke there must be fire, but that may not necessarily be true," said Buddy Parker, another former federal prosecutor in the Atlanta office. "The government might ultimately decide there is no fire and there is no basis to bring forth charges."

Spokesmen for the U.S. Attorney's office and Coke have declined to comment on any aspect of the investigation, which could take months longer to conclude. The investigation was not mentioned by Coke officials when they released fourth-quarter and year-end earnings last week.

Whitley was laid off last March, a month after he said he sent a memo to company president Steve Heyer detailing allegations of widespread fraud at Coke. In October, he settled his wrongful termination lawsuit against Coke for \$540,000. He said at the time he would continue to cooperate in the criminal investigation. (AP)

World

Life & Style

How to find Mr. Right in six weeks

By SARAH SCHAFFER

THE BALTIMORE SUN

Elle magazine's advice columnist and resident firecracker E. Jean Carroll wants you to get off her back—or at least read her new self-help book.

After receiving thousands of "HELP ME!" letters over the years from women desperately in need of a date, Carroll, herself twice divorced ("the normal amount," she says), was just plain tuckered out from all that counseling.

"I pour my brain through a sieve every day [for these people]," she says by phone. "I picture them lined up outside my door."

The former Saturday Night Live writer began to feel she had a "huge responsibility" to bear, and solving the problems of America's jaded, resourceless or terminally shy lonely hearts was becoming a bit too much to handle.

It was time to give her readers—and all single women, for that matter—more than just a quick response or a paragraph's worth of man-catching tips. And so it was that her new book, "Mr. Right, Right Now!: How a Smart Woman Can Land Her Dream Man in 6 Weeks" (HarperResource, \$23.95), was conceived and written.

But it's not just another single woman's tutorial on how one should talk, look, act or dress to impress any and all potential knights in shining armor, says Carroll.

Rather, Mr. Right, Right Now! is a practical guide that, if followed with Carroll-style moxie, guarantees the reader at least a date, if not a great one, even in time for Valentine's Day.

"This book is GUARANTEED to work!" she bellows with a chuckle.

"It's based on a principle that if you meet high numbers of men, then it becomes a mathematical certainty that you will meet Mr. Right," she adds.

All right, we say, that all sounds fine. Is there some kind of catch?

"But," E. Jean says (and there's always a 'but,' isn't there?), "you have to meet 20 guys a week."

How could any busy, successful, high-functioning, self-respecting woman give her phone number to 20 guys each and every week?

A smart reader can and will, E. Jean says, if she adheres to the six steps, which are as follows:

Week One: Adjust your attitude. Learn how to be "engaged with life," she writes.

Week Two: Take care of yourself, love your body and make your good traits great. (E. Jean notes, among other things, that wearing bold colors, sleeping for 10 hours a night and laughing, naked, in front of a mirror will help.

Week Three: Ditch your worries and fears.

Week Four: Go out and get 'em. The book's chapter on finding your man is titled "The 119 Best Places to Meet the Male Beast."

Week Five: Learn how to make the first approach. "Vex him! Thrash him! Keep him off-balance!" she writes.

Week Six: Meet and dazzle Mr. Right.

"Sports [bars] are the place. Why a woman would sit home on Sunday night watching 'Sex and the City' is beyond me. Sunday night is prime time at a sports bar. TAPE 'Sex and the City,'" she demands.

Once there, "sit at the bar with a big batch of french fries. It will tell the guy that you like food, you have pleasures in life, that you like people."

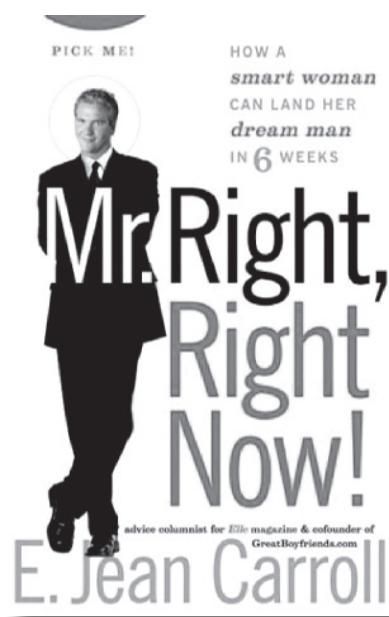
Why E. Jean, your Manolo Blahniks clearly have cut off the circulation to your brain! How could you suggest such a thing? Sitting alone in a bar—a SPORTS bar, no less—can be completely intimidating.

"You have to give your fears a kick you have to, must. It's not gonna kill you" to chat with a comely stranger, she says. "When you see that handsome guy you walk over and just smile and then venture a comment."

But aren't guys the ones who like to do all the approaching?

"Women like to chase just as much as men, and men like to be chased. Anybody who watches a troop of baboons or a group of young teen-age girls will know that females like to hunt. Just go shopping with one and I rest my case!"

So what happens when your french-fry bait lures in someone who's charm-



E. Jean Carroll

ing, good-looking or just plain fabulous—and then you freeze up?

Take a cue from the Woody Allen film "Annie Hall," she says, and let all that clumsy and bumbling and awkward drivel, er, conversation, flow freely. In other words, just be yourself.

"BY GOD, when you see a cute or even interesting guy . . . STOP and say something to him. You don't even have to make any sense. You just have to be in his presence" for a few moments, she says, bringing us to another key part of her plan: efficiency.

"Cutting-edge research shows that if (a real connection) doesn't happen in the

first 30 seconds, then it's probably not going to ever happen," E. Jean said.

That quick, initial interaction is what counts, as it will determine whether the wheels of love will be set into motion.

You may "click" with the guy even if you think you're acting like a complete boob. So "be true to your own essence" or else you could be setting yourself up for a romance based on falsehoods, she says.

"Clicking gives you a foundation on which to build something."

But—and here's another large "but"—"what you have to do is actually not care. You have to be indifferent to the outcome. You CANNOT care, because when you care, then [men will] mop up the floor with you," she quips.

Get in the mindset that you don't need a man in your life to be happy in the first place, and that's what will keep the plan working, she says.

But E. Jean's man-catching credo isn't exactly an overnight solution for every woman. Like any great quest, finding a truly wonderful guy is a complex maneuver that may take a few tries.

Just "listen to that voice," she says, the one inside your head. The one that whispers that the guy walking toward you on the street is cute, intriguing or maybe just familiar-looking. The one that encourages you to walk up to him and just say, "Hello."

He could be Mr. Right, or at least a date for next year's Valentine's Day.

Stars abound at NASCAR's biggest event

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (AP)—If the magnitude of a sporting event is judged by the number of stars who attend it, then it's safe to say the Daytona 500 is among the biggest.

Ben Affleck, Whoopi Goldberg, and LeAnn Rimes. Greg Norman, Evander Holyfield and Miss America.

President Bush, too.

At the pre-race driver's meeting Sunday, NASCAR president Mike Helton needed several minutes to introduce all the celebrities present for the Great American Race.

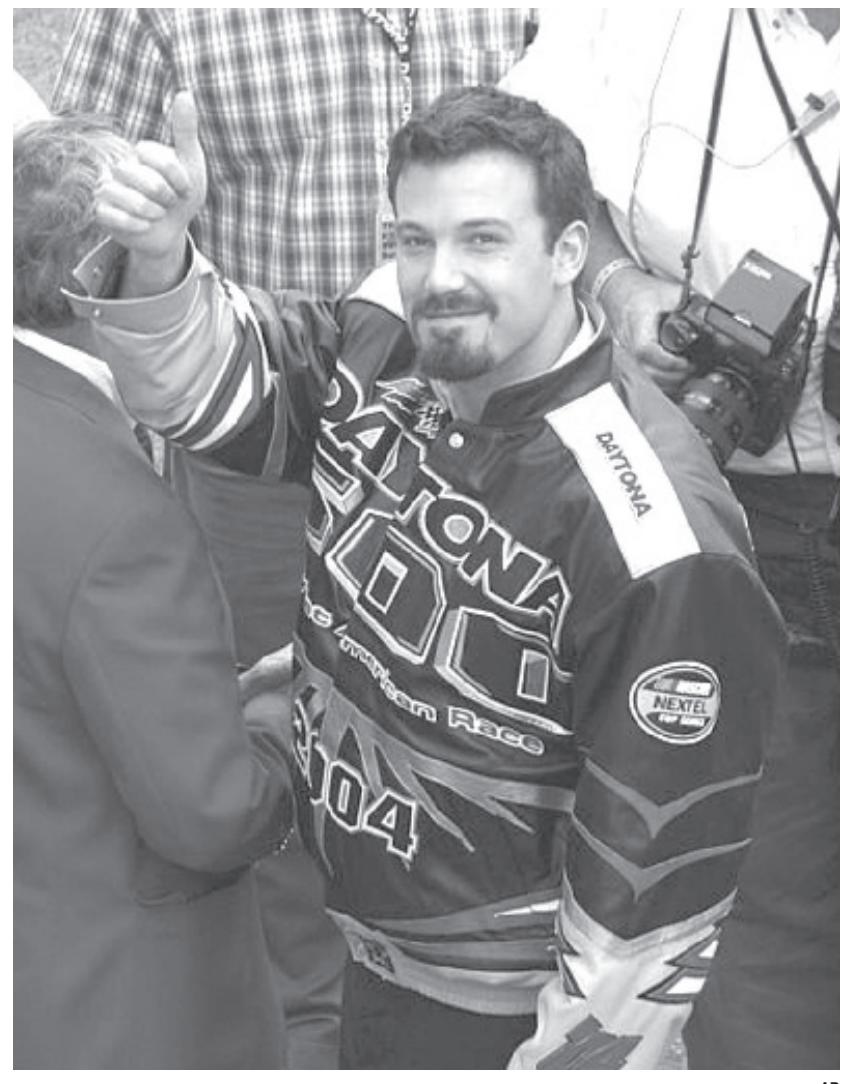
"I think that speaks," Helton said. "It's a compliment to the Daytona 500 and to NASCAR as to just how special an event this is."

Affleck served as the grand marshal—even though some of his duties were given to President Bush—Goldberg was an honorary starter, and Rimes sang the national anthem and was the featured performer in the pre-race "Tribute to America" show.

Lee Greenwood and the reigning Miss America, Ericka Dunlap, also sang.

Norman and Holyfield highlighted one of Daytona's longest list of sports stars. Boston Red Sox teammates Tim Wakefield and Derek Lowe, Florida Marlins third baseman Mike Lowell, former NFL linebacker Carl Banks and New Jersey Nets forward Rodney Rogers were on hand.

"You should feel honored that all these people are here to watch you," Helton told the drivers.



Affleck got the loudest ovation, but he also got some bad news.

"They told me I was going to be bumped, and I was like 'bumped? What are you talking about bumped? Who's bumping me?'" said Affleck, who drove the pace car. "'The President of the United States. OK, terrific. Guess I'm bumped then.'"

Actor James Caviezel, who plays Jesus in Mel Gibson's epic "The Passion of the Christ," spent the race in the pit of Bobby Labonte.

The movie already has drawn lavish praise from conservative clergy—including the Rev. Billy Graham—but angry denunciations from Jewish groups fearing it will stir up anti-Semitism. On the hood of Labonte's car was a plug for the new movie.

"Just consider it as a life insurance policy," Caviezel said.

Bush is the first president to visit the track since 1992, when his father came for the race. George W. Bush has been here before, in 1992, when he was governor of Texas and running for president. The first presidential visit was in 1984, when Ronald Reagan attended the Firecracker 400 in July, and Richard Petty won his 200th race.

Bush's appearance provided him with an opportunity to reach out to this election year's coveted "NASCAR dad" constituency—stereotyped as mostly white, male and Southern even though the sport's reach is much broader.

America's top chef returns to New York

NEW YORK (AP)—In a profession known for big egos and sharp knives, Thomas Keller got an uncharacteristic welcome from his fellow chefs.

Keller, regarded as the top chef in the United States for his French Laundry in California's Napa Valley, returns to New York with Per Se, a 64-seat restaurant that opens Monday night in the new Time Warner Center overlooking Central Park.

Last week, Daniel Boulud tossed a late-night reception to welcome Keller back to New York, a city he left in the 1980s. Even Andre Soltner, who set the standard for U.S. cooking at Lutece from 1961 until 1994, attended what seemed like a culinary coronation.

"You're going to raise the bar so high, we're all going to pass under," said Boulud, Keller's boss at New York's Westbury Hotel in 1983.

When Per Se's reservation lines opened Feb. 2, the phones were jammed for 10 straight hours as New York's foodies tried to book one of the 16 tables, wanting to savor menus that run \$125 (five courses), \$135 (nine courses of vegetables) and \$150 (chef's tasting menu).

Actor Ben Affleck gives a thumbs-up prior to being introduced to the crowd at the Daytona 500 at the Daytona International Speedway in Daytona Beach, Fla. Sunday Feb. 15, 2004. Affleck is the grand marshal for the race.

‘Return of the King’ earns five BAFTAs

By MATT WOLF
AP WRITER

LONDON (AP)—Fantasy epic “The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King” was named best film at the British Academy Film Awards on Sunday, while “Lost in Translation” co-stars Bill Murray and Scarlett Johansson took the top acting honors.

“The Return of the King” was nominated for 12 awards, known as BAFTAs, and won five: best picture, cinematography, adapted screenplay and

special effects, as well as film of the year as voted by the public.

In accepting the prize for best film, New Zealand-born director Peter Jackson honored the trilogy written by Briton J.R.R. Tolkien.

“We were a bunch of Kiwis and some Australians” who brought to the screen “one of Britain’s most beloved books—a fantastic property,” Jackson said.

The third installment in the film trilogy is nominated for 11 Academy Awards, which will be held Feb. 29. The British awards have become an important pre-Oscar

stop since being moved to before the Academy Awards.

“The Return of the King” beat Anthony Minghella’s Civil War saga “Cold Mountain,” Sophia Coppola’s quirky “Lost In Translation,” Tim Burton’s whimsical “Big Fish” and Peter Weir’s seafaring saga “Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World” to take the best-film prize from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts.

Weir won best director, and his naval adventure won four awards in all.

Renee Zellweger was named

best supporting actress for “Cold Mountain.” The civil war drama led the nominations with 13, but won only two awards—Zellweger’s and best music.

The best supporting actor went to Bill Nighy as amiably dissolute rock star Billy Mack in the British romantic comedy “Love, Actually.”

“Lost In Translation,” only its young director’s second feature, won three BAFTAs.

In taking the best actress award, 19-year-old Johansson beat her own performance in “Girl With a Pearl Earring,” as well as Uma

Thurman for “Kill Bill,” Naomi Watts for “21 Grams” and Anne Reid for “The Mother.”

Johansson thanked the British Academy “for acknowledging ... a 19-year-old American actress” and then thanked her mother for “taking me to auditions and buying me hot dogs afterward.”

Sean Penn also was nominated twice in the best-actor category—for “21 Grams” and “Mystic River”—but lost out to Murray’s jet-lagged movie star adrift in Tokyo in the comedy of cultural dislocation.

“Girl With a Pearl Earring” was shut out the awards despite 10 nominations, as was Clint Eastwood’s intense “Mystic River”—an early Os-

car favorite—which had four nominations.

Sundance hit “The Station Agent” won the best screenplay award, while the prize for best British film went to “Touching the Void,” Kevin Macdonald’s powerful docudrama about an ill-fated mountaineering expedition.

A British film also won the award for best film not in the English language. Michael Winterbottom’s “In This World,” shot with amateur actors across two continents, follows two Afghan refugees on a perilous journey to seek asylum in Britain.

Emily Young, writer-director of “Kiss of Life,” won a special achievement award for a first-time filmmaker.



Andre 3000, of the group OutKast performs “Hey Ya!” during the 46th Annual Grammy Awards, Sunday, Feb. 8, 2004, in Los Angeles.

CBS apologizes for OutKast performance

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP)—CBS apologized to American Indians angered by OutKast’s Grammy Awards performance, which featured feathers and war paint.

“We are very sorry if anyone was offended,” said Nancy Carr, a CBS spokeswoman in Los Angeles, on Friday.

As the final act of Sunday’s Grammy telecast, OutKast’s Andre “3000” Benjamin and several dancers swirled wildly around a green teepee as he sang “Hey Ya!” Costumes included war paint, feathers and fringe.

OutKast’s hip-hoppy jive won three trophies: best urban-alternative performance for

“Hey Ya!” and best rap album and overall album of the year for “Speakerboxxx/The Love Below.”

“I like OutKast. I like their music,” said Tom Bee, an Albuquerque record producer and musician, who was nominated for the Native American music Grammy. “But I thought the show was not correct. It was degrading.”

The San Francisco-based Native American Cultural Center called for a boycott of CBS; OutKast; Arista, their record company; and the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, which sponsors the Grammys.

The center also has filed a

complaint with the Federal Communications Commission and said it posted documents online explaining “why this broadcast was racist and why the companies involved need to take responsibility for their commercialization of Native American culture.”

The Web site also urged viewers to “Turn Off CBS,” and for each boycotter to ask 10 friends to do likewise.

In New York, a woman who answered the phone Friday at Arista Records’ publicity office said OutKast had no immediate comment.

George Toya of the Jemez Pueblo powwow group Black Eagle, who was in the audience

at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, said he was initially happy when he heard the chant that opened OutKast’s performance. He thought he was about to see an American Indian group perform.

“It was a Navajo song that I recognized, and I got a little excited,” said Toya, who was at the ceremony with other members of Black Eagle to pick up a Grammy for best Native American music album for “Flying Free.”

But the drumming was actually the intro to “Hey Ya!”

Toya said he couldn’t believe it.

“I told my wife who was sitting beside me, ‘Somebody is going to be (angry) about this,’” he said.

John Edwards is the talk of ‘Tonight Show’

BURBANK, Calif. (AP)—Democratic presidential hopeful John Edwards was the talk of NBC’s “Tonight Show,” even before he walked on stage. During his opening riff, host Jay Leno joked about Edwards’ tradition of taking his wife to Wendy’s for a Valentine’s Day dinner.

“That should be his platform,” Leno said Friday night. “Any guy who can convince his wife to go to Wendy’s every year on Valentine’s Day should be elected. Imagine what he could convince the leaders of other countries to do.”

Later, during an interview with guest Diane Keaton, the actress professed her admiration for the Democratic senator from North Carolina, saying she watched him every day on CNN and was thrilled to meet him in person.

“Now that I’m nominated (for an Oscar), I feel like I’m in a race too. I think about him and I don’t know how he’s doing this,” she said. “It’s hard to be out there and be substantive and be involved and be excited.”

“I was very pleased to hear that,” he said during a brief exchange with reporters. “I

think the world of her and my wife loves her.”

Edwards was in California to make several campaign and fund-raising stops.

During the show, he touched on such issues as gay marriage and the loss of U.S. jobs to overseas workers. If elected, Edwards said, he would support the right of individual states to decide whether to allow gay marriage.

“If California chooses to recognize same-sex marriage, that’s fine and the federal government ought to honor it,” he said.

Edwards also said he believes

major policy changes are needed to prevent companies from shipping jobs overseas. He said he would support placing environmental regulations on countries that take American jobs.

“Right now we’ve leaned so far into free trade that we’ve forgotten what fair trade is,” he said.

Edwards also chided Leno for a slip of tongue during the show, in which the comedian called him a vice presidential candidate.

The candidate, who has said he’s not considering running for vice president, responded that he could support an Edwards-Kerry ticket.

'50 First Dates' scores \$41M on weekend

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Adam Sandler and Drew Barrymore's romance "50 First Dates" proved an irresistible draw for the Valentine's weekend date crowd, taking in \$41 million to debut as the top movie, according to studio estimates Sunday.

If the estimates hold, it would be the second-biggest February opening ever, behind the \$58 million debut of "Hannibal" in 2001 and just ahead of last year's "Daredevil" at \$40.3 million.

The previous weekend's top

film, "Barbershop 2: Back in Business," slipped to second place with \$15.6 million, bringing its 10-day total to \$44.1 million.

The overall box office was down, with the top 12 movies grossing \$107.8 million, off 13 percent from the same weekend last year.

"50 First Dates" was a reunion for Sandler and Barrymore, who starred in "The Wedding Singer," which opened over Valentine's weekend in 1998.

Sandler's main audience is males in their teens and 20s, who

turned out in force, but women made up 57 percent of the crowds on the strength of Barrymore and the movie's romantic theme, distributor Sony reported.

And the Valentine's weekend sealed the deal with audiences.

"Talk about great timing. For a lot of couples, this was their Valentine entertainment," said Paul Dergarabedian, president of box-office tracker Exhibitor Relations.

Sandler plays a womanizer smitten by Barrymore, an accident vic-

tim who forgets the previous day's memories each morning, forcing Sandler to dream up new ways for the two to meet and fall in love.

Playing in 3,591 theaters, "50 First Dates" averaged a strong \$11,417 a cinema.

With many people off work Monday for President's Day, "50 First Dates" should come out of the long weekend about halfway to the \$100 million level. The movie is positioned to become the first released in 2004 to top that mark.

Aguilera, Elliott to pitch Viva Glam

NEW YORK (AP)—MAC cosmetics has introduced five new representatives—including Christina Aguilera and Missy Elliott—for Viva Glam products that will benefit the MAC AIDS Fund.

All proceeds from Viva Glam V Lipstick and Lipglass will go to the fund, which provides money to organizations that provide care and daily essentials to those afflicted with HIV/AIDS and that offer education, awareness and prevention programs.

Aguilera, Elliott, supermodel Linda Evangelista, Chloe Sevigny and Boy George were introduced at a press conference Wednesday. MAC President John Demsey said they were asked to join the project because they represent the many faces of AIDS patients—"all ages, all races, all sexes."

The stars, featured in an advertising campaign shot by Michael Thompson, said they are hopeful a cure for AIDS will be found in the near future so the MAC AIDS Fund could be disbanded and the lipsticks retired.

Elliott's cousin died recently from complications from AIDS. "None of us are immune," Elliott said.

Over the past 10 years, MAC has raised more than \$32 million through the sales of the Viva Glam lipstick collection. Previous spokesmen include Elton John and Mary J. Blige.

Viva Glam V products will be in stores next month.

Richard honors late musician

MACON, Ga. (AP)—Little Richard attended funeral services for a Georgia musician who helped him get started in the recording industry and once supplied him with a shirt and a car for a performance at the Apollo Theatre.

Melvin C. "Percy" Welch offered Little Richard a place in his band in 1952.

"I didn't have clothes," Little Richard recalled Saturday at Welch's funeral in Macon. "My mama had 12 kids. My daddy was a bootlegger, and the boot was empty that day."

Welch, 75, died Feb. 8 of kidney failure.



MAC cosmetics has introduced five new spokespeople including Christina Aguilera, shown in this undated photo, for Viva Glam products that will benefit the MAC AIDS Fund.

AP

Bradbury hails Bush's Mars proposal

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. (AP)—Ray Bradbury, author of the science-fiction classic "The Martian Chronicles," says President Bush's proposal to put humans on Mars could open new worlds in much the same way European explorers discovered America.

"We have to imagine

what they couldn't imagine. Because of their exploration they created us—the greatest country in the history of the world," Bradbury said Saturday after a book-signing.

"We're going to



Bradbury

go with real people and land on Mars in the next 20 years, and I'm going to be buried in a tomato soup can on Mars," joked Bradbury, who is 83. "I'll be the first one up there."

Germany honors US choreographer Forsythe

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP)—American choreographer William Forsythe has been awarded Germany's top dance prize in recognition of his role revitalizing the world of ballet and modern dance.

The president of Germany's Theater Association, Klaus Zehelein, commended Forsythe, who

heads the Ballet Frankfurt, for his "extraordinary service to the artistic world of dance" at the awards ceremony in Essen late Saturday.

Forsythe, 54, is ending his contract with the Frankfurt Ballet at the end of this year's season, after a drawn-out battle with the cash-strapped city of Frankfurt over the troupe's existence.

Since 1984 Forsythe has led the Frankfurt Ballet and built it into one of Europe's most acclaimed modern dance groups.

Forsythe, a native New Yorker, will continue his work in Germany with a smaller, independent troupe that will be supported by and perform in both Frankfurt and Dresden.

Teen must improve his cast if he hopes to catch a keeper

By AVIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: You were far too easy on the ninth-grade boy who said: "Women are like fish. If you have the right bait, they are easy to lure in. Once you've sampled the goods, then you throw them back." He asked "what was up" with all the "unfortunate women and their out-of-wedlock pregnancies and bad relationships" and said that men don't have these problems.

What kind of male role model does that boy have? He appears to be headed for many brief relationships if he has the preconception that women are to be hooked and then let go. With that mind-set, he'll miss out on the love and stability of a healthy relationship when the "right fish" comes along and he has the wrong attitude.

He should look at the lake from the top instead of the bottom. The water is kinda murky from his vantage point.

HOOKED AND RELEASED BY CHOICE, CANTON, OHIO

DEAR H&R: You're right. Did that letter ever touch a nerve. I was inundated with mail. Read on:

DEAR ABBY: I have a hunch that boy has "sampled" some goods and "thrown them back" despite his claim that "he isn't like that." Girls who have out-of-wedlock pregnancies and bad relationships don't get that way by themselves. There are boys involved.

You should have told him that he's not as smart as he thinks he is, and to look for better role models for how to treat women.

P.S. Reminding him to always keep a "net" handy to cover his "fishing pole" wouldn't have been a bad idea either.

MARGARET IN EASTON, PENN.

DEAR MARGARET: Not a bad suggestion. It might keep him from getting in over his head.

DEAR ABBY: My name is Kelsey. I live in Japan and have a few words for "Mr. Fisherman." Women are NOT like fish! Is it so wrong to actually trust a guy? By the sound of it, I think you are out there casting your hook as well. I hope you know where I hope it lands! Women are no more gullible than any other human can be, and we are not stupid. I have had a couple of bad relationships, but I'm grateful for them. They made me smarter.

"LITTLE FISHY" IN NINTH GRADE

DEAR "LITTLE FISHY": Good point. It may take a couple of "strikes," but people learn from experience.

DEAR ABBY: For every bad relationship and every single mother, there is a man who contributed to it. Women use sex to get love. Men use love to get sex. Which seems to be the lesser of the evils?

TAKES TWO TO TANGO, VANCOUVER, WASH.

DEAR TAKES TWO: Neither. When people do THAT dance, they both get cheated because neither one is a commodity to be traded for the other.

DEAR ABBY: What's up with all these men who leave women after they impregnate them? They bolt at the sight of anything more complicated than Monday night football or hoot-ing at a strip club.

Men are like dogs. If they smell food, they'll come panting. If they were smart enough to accomplish more than a few simple tricks for treats, there wouldn't be a need to write this letter.

Offended? GOOD! Not all women are like fish, hoping to catch bait their entire lives. Women are strong, ambitious, intelligent people. Not all men are dogs, either. Some men are loving, generous and intelligent enough to lead healthy, functional lives supporting their partners as equals. Unfortunately, "Fisherman" is too juvenile to see this. By the way, I'm also in ninth grade.

MICHELLE S., MENLO PARK, CALIF.

DEAR MICHELLE: Thank you for an excellent response. You have a good head on your shoulders. I hope my male readers understand that girls who have strong, active male role models in their lives are less likely to take the bait when it's offered.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

The official rules for both runs are as follows:

All registered runners must be checked-in prior to the start time; all runners must remain on the ocean side of Beach Road throughout the course; all runners must also remain on the shoulder of the road within coned areas.

Running anywhere else may result in a disqualification.

An official will be stationed at each turn-around marker for check-off. Runners not checked off will be disqualified from the competition.

The 10k turn-around is located across the Saipan Bowling Center in San Jose. The turn-around marker for the Half Marathon is at the San Antonio Beach Park just



SPORTS BRIEFS

122 CONFIRMED

From Page 28



So far, 11 tournaments slated by BANMI

Eleven basketball tournaments and still counting.

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

28 THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 2004

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

O'Neal's Pacers stop Pistons' 13-game winning streak

Jermaine O'Neal had 28 points and 15 rebounds to help the Indiana Pacers snap the Detroit Pistons' 13-game winning streak Tuesday with an 81-69 victory.

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122 confirmed for Half Marathon/10K

Race orientation tomorrow

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER

A total of 122 competitors, mostly from Japan, have confirmed participating in the upcoming Saipan Half Marathon/10K Fun Run, which will take place this Saturday, January 24.

Off the 122 runners, 79 will see action in the 23rd Annual Half Marathon while 43 will slug it out for supremacy in the 18th Annual 10K Fun Run.

Those figures were released yesterday during a meeting between the Marianas Visitors Authority and Northern Mariana Islands Track and Field Federation at the MVA office in San Jose.

According to Ed Johnson of MVA, over 50 percent of the total number of participants are from Japan.

"We were working closely with our offices in Japan and Korea, and as of today [January 21], more than 50 percent are from Japan," he said. "Majority from Japan are above 50 years old and have participated in this event for 10-plus years. It is a well known event, formerly known as the MVA Buffalo Fun Run, so runners from Japan are pretty familiar with it."

Prior to the event, all participants are encouraged to attend a race orientation tomorrow, January 23, at the MVA parking lot. A briefing for all non-English speaking runners will be held at 4:30pm while English-speaking competitors will have their orientation



SHAN SEMAN

Organizers of the upcoming Saipan Half Marathon/10K Championships strike a pose for a photo during a meeting yesterday at the Marianas Visitors Authority conference room. Standing from left to right are Elias Rangamar and Robin Eugenio of the Northern Mariana Islands Track and Field Federation, and Ed Johnson and Martin Duenas of the MVA. Sitting is NMITFF president Kurt Barnes.

at 5pm. MVA will also provide translators and account staff to handle payments of fees.

The fee required to compete in either

runs is \$30. However, the last day to register is Saturday between 4:30 and 5:15am during the pre-race check-in. Both races will then get underway at 5:

30am at the intersection of the American Memorial Park and Beach Road just north of the Department of Public Safety Garapan Substation. Runners

will work their way south along Beach Road and back track to the finish line, also located at the intersection.

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Roddick, Agassi win at Australian Open

By JOHN PYE
AP SPORTS WRITER



MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Top-ranked Andy Roddick and defending champion Andre Agassi breezed into the third round of the Australian Open by winning in straight sets Wednesday over Czech rivals.

Agassi had a 6-0, 6-2, 6-4 win over 18-year-old Tomas Berdych, closing with an ace in 1 hour 22 minutes. Roddick fired 20 aces and didn't lose a point on his first serve in the third set of a 6-2, 6-2, 6-3 win over Bohdan Ulihrach.

Roddick set up triple match point with a curling forehand winner down the line and finished it off in 1:13 with a booming first-serve winner.

Justine Henin-Hardenne, ranked No. 1 and winner at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open in 2003, had a 6-1, 6-4 win over childhood friend Camille Pin of France in her second-round match,

See Roddick on Page 27



Andre Agassi of the U.S. reacts after his second round win over Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic at the Australian Open in Melbourne, Australia, Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2004. Agassi won in straight sets 6-0, 6-2, 6-4.

Youth Volleyball canceled as teams pull out

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER

Just last week, it seemed like everything was set for another thrilling season of youth volleyball action.

That, however, won't be the case as Division of Sports and Recreation staff Jovie Omar stated yesterday that officials have decided to cancel the Island-wide Youth Volleyball League 2004 season due to an insufficient number of teams participating.

Omar said that the Marianas High School Dolphins and the Kagman High School Ayayus pulled out of the competition after learning that it will coincide with another volleyball league that they've committed to. The other league is being coordinated by the Marianas Interscholastic Sports Association—the sports body for high schools. She also hinted but did not confirm that the Saipan Southern High School Manta Rays might have also pulled out to compete in the MISA league.



With the three teams withdrawing, the boys division was left with just one team—Shag. Only two teams remained in the girls' division—Chickas and the Grace Christian Academy Eagles—forcing officials to call the league off.

For the record, the league featured just one official result in 2004. Last Thursday, the defending champions Chickas were scheduled to battle the Eagles in the season-opener, but suited up just four players for the match, resulting in the Eagles winning via forfeit.

The league, normally held in November, was postponed several times towards the end of last year due to the same reason it was canceled. Earlier in the month, officials were positive as more teams signed up for competition. A total of 20 games were scheduled to take place in the girls' division while the boys' corner would've featured 12 matches in the regular season.